

Report to Cabinet

23 November 2017

By the Leader of The Council

DECISION REQUIRED



**Horsham
District
Council**

Not Exempt

Horsham Town Centre Vision Statement

Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to seek approval of the Town Centre Vision statement which has been amended in the light of public and stakeholder representations received during the consultation carried out in September and October 2017. This includes endorsement of the Delivery Schedule of future projects, in order to deliver the Vision.

Consultants' Bilfinger GVA were engaged following a competitive procurement exercise to prepare a draft Town Centre Vision statement. The objective is to establish an aspirational, comprehensive and deliverable medium term vision (10-15 years) for Horsham Town Centre.

The Vision statement seeks to achieve this having undertaken a review of broad population characteristics, retail, residential, office and hotel market factors, and an analysis of the town centre's current weaknesses and opportunities. This is then developed into a set of Strategic Directions and analysis of broad opportunity areas within the town centre, followed by a specific examination of potential development sites and future delivery steps.

Following an early stakeholder workshop held in 2016, ideas were developed into an exhibition of strategic directions and potential opportunity areas and sites, including options to improve the Bishopric public realm, which were consulted on in May and June 2017 with feedback incorporated into the emerging draft 'Vision' statement. The majority of responses supported the strategic directions identified in the 'Vision' and the opportunity sites with the exception of the redevelopment of the Sainsbury's store and car park which has now been removed from further consideration.

The draft Horsham Town Vision statement is now recommended to be approved as the overarching framework for the delivery of a number of town centre projects that are set out in section 9 of the Vision statement

Recommendations

That the Cabinet is recommended:

- i) To note and consider the representations and responses received during the consultation and approve the Horsham Town Centre Vision statement incorporating amendments as detailed in Appendix C.

- ii) Endorse the Delivery Schedule of projects, at Section 9 of the statement and as attached in Appendix D, to bring forward development and enhancement opportunities over the 'Vision' period.
- iii) Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to approve minor editorial changes prior to publication.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) Amendments have been made in the light of responses received on the draft Horsham Town Centre Vision statement.
- ii) To provide guidance on the future development of Horsham Town Centre and to implement a Delivery Schedule of projects to further develop the 'Vision' in detail.
- iii) There is a need to allow for minor editorial changes. Any significant changes to the document would need to be reported back to Cabinet for approval before publication.

Background Papers

- Horsham District Hotel and Visitor Accommodation Study 2016
- Horsham Town Centre Parking Review 2016
- Horsham Town Retail & Leisure Study 2017
- Town Centre Vision Exhibition Consultation Response Summary June 2017
- Bishopric Consultation Responses June 2017

Wards affected:

Denne, Forest, Horsham Park, Trafalgar

Contact:

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Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Horsham town centre has a high quality historic core, most of which is designated as a Conservation Area including upwards of 50 listed buildings, which has created a high quality shopping experience for residents and visitors. However, with the close proximity of larger competing centres such as Crawley, Guildford and Worthing, and the changing needs of modern retailers and e-commerce, it is essential that the Council continues to understand these changing needs and looks to strengthen the retail offer and promote a 'Vision' that identifies and encourages future opportunities for further enhancement, without causing harm to the high quality historic environment.
- 1.2 Horsham town has a good record as a successful retail location as evidenced, for example, by the opening of John Lewis Home and Waitrose stores and has generally survived the recession well with comparatively low void (empty shop) rates. Although it is recognised that Horsham town may not be capitalising on its full potential and that competing centres may be larger and currently provide a wider range of retail and leisure choice, it is also recognised that the town offers an alternative experience based on its high quality public realm, attractive cafés, restaurants and independent shops supported by key anchor stores that provide the basis for the existing high levels of consumer retention.
- 1.3 The purpose of the 'Vision' process was to:
 - Identify key drivers and opportunities for Horsham Town Centre;
 - Examine the retail, office, housing, hotel markets and overall viability context;
 - Integrate parallel retail, hotel and transport studies and produce a deliverable, composite picture of the future;
 - Address the role of development opportunities;
 - Consider other improvements within the town centre;
 - Proactively plan for the future;
 - Be flexible enough to respond to opportunities; and
 - Ensure long-term competitiveness as the town continues to change and evolve.
- 1.4 Particular concerns at the outset were sustaining Piries Place following Waitrose's relocation; improving Blackhorse Way; improving the retail offer to Horsham's 'West End'; developing the night time economy and identifying and promoting viable development opportunities that enhance and support the town's future.
- 1.5 Following the establishment of a Project Board and an all Member seminar in late 2015, consultant services were procured with the following remit and scope:
 - To produce a vision of planned, emerging and future development opportunities.
 - Possible public realm improvements within the town centre.
 - Bring together retail/leisure, hotel and parking studies.
 - Show how the changes could look and feel - how they could relate to each other and the town centre.
 - Provide clarity on what can be delivered, what needs to be 'unlocked' and how to achieve this.
 - Vision to be economically viable and deliverable.

- Proactively planning for the future and be flexible enough to respond to opportunities.
- To inform and stimulate discussion with our local community.
- The town centre area for this purpose was defined as the area bounded by Albion Way, Parkway, East Street, Denne Road and the River Arun including secondary retail/gateways at Queen Street and Freshwater Parade and North Street.

- 1.6 A baseline review gathered key information on the existing planning framework including key policies and targets, the planning and investment pipeline, market conditions, key opportunity sites and socio-economic conditions with initial scenarios for selected sites and locations were also prepared. Community views were also examined through feedback on the emerging business Neighbourhood Forum being prepared by Horsham Blueprint. From this analysis the town centre's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) were identified. In response a set of Strategic Directions were developed to influence broad policy and investment directions as well as shape responses to specific projects.
- 1.7 A stakeholder workshop was held in June 2016 to present the baseline research, SWOT analysis and the emerging Strategic Directions and to discuss key topics – What is important to keep? What needs to be strengthened? What needs to change and how should it change? Consultation was then undertaken with key landowners including Sainsbury's, West Sussex County Council, AVIVA, Reef Estates, Royal Sun Alliance and Network Rail.
- 1.8 A further seminar was held for Members on 10 May 2017 prior to a second stakeholder meeting held on 18 May within Swan Walk shopping centre. A Town Centre Vision and Bishopric Enhancement Exhibition comprising a review of the town's strengths and weaknesses, strategic directions and site improvement opportunities and areas, was held on 19 and 20 May to which over 1100 visitors attended. The Exhibition transferred to Horsham Library until 19 June. Over 320 responses were received, across all age ranges, to the 'Vision' ideas and Bishopric enhancement options including responses from Sainsbury's, AVIVA, Denne and Forest Neighbourhood Councils and Horsham District Cycling Forum. A summary of the overall consultation responses are attached at **Appendix A** and **B** respectively.
- 1.9 Significant levels of support were expressed for the seven Strategic Directions as follows:
- SD1 Respond to demographic change.
 - SD2 Strengthen retail and leisure, support employment growth and the economy.
 - SD3 Increase and diversify housing provision.
 - SD4 Expand hotel provision.
 - SD5 Support new cultural and community infrastructure.
 - SD6 Enhance access and movement.
 - SD7 Evolving image and identity.
- 1.10 There was overall support for the following identified Opportunity Areas:
- North Street Commercial Quarter; West/Forum/Sainsbury's pedestrian link;
 - Blackhorse Way – Waste and Servicing and improving the public realm but retaining current Carfax bus stops;

- Forum and Library Areas to provide additional residential and retail accommodation and to examine the provision of a new, larger, replacement library and health facilities together with housing and retail uses;
- Improve the Queen Street area and identity;
- Examine the potential for additional car parking and housing on the Station and RSA car parks; and
- Enhancement options for the Bishopric.

The idea to relocate the Sainsbury's store with underground car parking to the west, facing Worthing Road, to free up space to provide additional housing was not supported and has been omitted from further consideration.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 To develop and progress a Horsham Town Centre Vision is a 2016-19 Corporate Plan Economic priority - to support and improve the local economy.

3 Details

- 3.1 Following the analysis, stakeholder engagement and the public exhibition in May and June 2017, a draft Town Centre Vision statement was finalised over the summer taking account of all feedback received to date.
- 3.2 A further all Member Seminar was held on 12 September prior to the start of public and stakeholder consultation from 18 September to 16 October. Over 96 representations have been received from interested individuals as well as responses from AVIVA, Denne Neighbourhood Council, Horsham District Cycling Forum, Horsham Society, Horsham in Bloom and West Sussex County Council. Changes are proposed in the light of the comments received. A copy of all representations, responses and proposed amendments is attached at **Appendix C**.

Consultation Summary

- 3.2 AVIVA supports the Horsham Town Centre Vision in the context of creating an enhanced, diverse and competitive retail and leisure environment that sets out to compete with the changing behaviours of the retail industry, such as online shopping, and the growth of competing centres. Swan Walk is a strategic asset both in its location and its current and prospective retail offering. The recognition of Swan Walk as an opportunity area is therefore strongly encouraged to strengthen the retail and leisure offer in line with the Council's strategic direction and enhance the competitiveness of the town centre.
- 3.3 *The 'Vision' statement will be amended to recognise the shopping centre, as a whole, as an opportunity area to support future enhancement and improvement schemes by the provision of new retail, leisure and restaurant floorspace to complement the existing retail offer and support the vitality and viability of the shopping centre. Amendments are detailed in **Appendix C**.*
- 3.3 Denne Neighbourhood Council while agreeing with most of the views in the 'Vision' the Neighbourhood Council has commented that very little, in terms of development and enhancement opportunities, is new and that there are few solutions to existing problems.

- 3.4 *The purpose of the 'Vision' was to examine the factors that would impact on the town centre over the next 10 years and provide a strategic response while identifying and seeking agreement on a broad range of opportunities to be developed further. The 'Vision' is not intended to be a finalised view of the town centre but seeks to identify a broad range on projects and initiatives to be progressed in detail. The Town Centre Vision statement is intended to be the start and not the end of a continuing conversation about the way in which the town centre can and will develop. Section 9 of the 'Vision' statement outlines the Delivery Schedule which sets out the specific projects, aligned to the overall Strategic Directions, to be developed in detail and consulted on in due course.*
- 3.5 *The Neighbourhood Council also provide a number of detailed suggestions and comments which are listed with responses in **Appendix C**.*
- 3.6 *Horsham District Cycling Forum (HDCF) object to the Vision because it feels it offers nothing for cycling or meaningful improvements to cycling facilities. The Forum believes that the Vision should have been an interesting, challenging and ambitious approach to how develop Horsham and the town centre, how to reach it by cycle, how to build a network of cycle routes, how to cross the dual carriageways to reach the centre, how to reach the shops, how to get around and what the future holds for the town and its residents.*
- 3.7 *While supportive of the Forum's overall aspirations, the Council throughout all the stakeholder engagement has made clear the remit of the 'Vision' is a strategic document with a focus on broad opportunity areas and key sites with detailed plans to be developed in due course once the broad strategic vision has been consulted upon and approved.*
- 3.8 *The Council is committed to developing a Walking and Cycling strategy as part of the 'Vision's' future Delivery Schedule and to working with the Forum, West Sussex County Council and other key partners to bring it to fruition. **Appendix C** provides responses to the detailed series of comments also submitted by the Forum.*
- 3.9 *The Horsham Society, in summary, requests that the Vision be more ambitious, tackling the difficult questions of access into town, improvement of the gateways, the crossings of Albion Way, entertainment options, residential ideas for different age groups, education, tourism as well as creating a north to south route, to name a few. Overall, the Society believes that the Vision lacks breadth and ambition.*
- 3.10 *Similar to the response to the Cycling Forum, the remit of the 'Vision' is strategic in nature with detailed projects, such as those suggested by the Horsham Society, to follow through the implementation of the Delivery Schedule.*
- 3.11 *The Society acknowledges that:
"The Vision does propose the development of a Public Realm Strategy, a Cycling Strategy, a Walking Strategy and a Tourism Strategy, all as key projects. It is important that these are separate documents, each concentrating on either a single mode of transport or a single issue and we expect them to cover many of the issues we highlight."*

- 3.12 *As stated in the Delivery Schedule the Council is committed to bringing forward detailed strategies and projects working with the key partners as listed including the Horsham Society. It should be acknowledged that each project is a major and detailed area of work in itself. What the draft 'Vision' establishes, following the baseline analysis, exhibition and consultation is a broad consensus on the way forward in terms of the Strategic Directions and the key Opportunity Areas and sites. Responses to the Horsham Society's detailed comments are included in Appendix C.*
- 3.13 *Horsham in Bloom (HIB) raised concerns regarding the absence of "Greening" within the 'Vision' including the artist's impressions of the Bishopric and Piries Place and requests that 'Greening' is regarded as an integral element with comparable importance as the preservation and enhancement of the town. It requests that its organisation is recognised as a Key Partner within the Delivery Scheduled projects.*
- 3.14 *The Council welcomes and accepts that 'Greening' as part of any future public realm landscaping project is an important consideration to be taken together with the preservation and enhancement of the town's historic character. Horsham in Bloom is recognised as a Key Partner in bringing forward the Delivery Schedule.*
- 3.15 *West Sussex County Council welcome the development of the 'Vision' and notes that the Strategic Directions and Opportunity sites have been subject to consultation and the Vision amended accordingly including the development of a delivery schedule for those sites. The County Council has set out that there will be a need for schemes to be developed, designed, tested and refined using evidence; be subject to business cases, consultation and all relevant statutory processes before they can be implemented. This is acknowledged and the 'Vision' amended accordingly.*
- 3.16 *The County Council support, as set out in the Delivery Schedule, the preparation of a public realm strategy and a walking and cycling strategy, with Horsham District Cycle Forum (HDCF) and WSCC being referenced as key partners in both cases. The walking and cycling strategy should highlight the priority routes for future investment in order to increase levels of walking and cycling. Through this work consideration should be given to the aims and objectives of the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy 2016 – 2026 and the list of potential schemes contained within it as well as the Government's cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS) and the target to double levels of cycling by 2025.*
- 3.17 *Support for the strategies is welcomed and as set out in the Delivery Schedule. The proposed Walking and Cycling Strategy will reference and address the aims and objectives of the existing County and Government strategies.*
- 3.18 *The County Council said it looked forward to continuing to work with the District Council on the identified opportunities affecting land in County ownership in the town centre such as Horsham Library and notes that there are a series of detailed matters that would need to be taken into account in bringing forward any proposals to develop the library area including the requirement above, to be subject to a detailed business case and consultation.*
- 3.19 *The District Council welcomes the opportunity to explore possible future development options, where this can also deliver demonstrable benefits for future service provision and the long term viability of the town centre, while acknowledging*

*the requirement for any schemes to comply with normal project, business case and statutory approval processes. **Appendix C** details the proposed amendments to be made in response.*

- 3.20 A number of responses from the New Street Neighbourhood Action Group and the Friends of New Street Garden were received on 9 November after the consultation closing date. These have been included in **Appendix C** together with recommended responses for consideration by Cabinet.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Subject to Cabinet's agreement to approve the 'Vision' statement the amended version will be published in due course following the call-in period. Following this, project teams will be established to commence work on the listed Delivery Schedule projects. The Delivery Schedule forms part of Section 9 of the Vision but is separately attached at **Appendix D** for ease of reference.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 The Horsham Town Vision is sponsored by the Leader of the Council as a key corporate project whose governance includes a Project Board, made up of Horsham Town Centre Members as well as the Cabinet Member for Planning and Development and the Cabinet Member for Local Economy. Unlike other Cabinet Members there is no associated Policy Development Group. In place of this, All Member seminars have been held as detailed in Section 3 together with details of all external consultations undertaken, the results and outcomes. The Town Centre Vision Project Board was consulted on 6 November and approved the draft Cabinet report.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The Council has no legal obligation to prepare a Vision for its main town and could choose not to do so but it is considered that a proactive approach is the most effective way to maximise development opportunities and further investment in the town centre.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 There are no resourcing or staffing implications associated with the adoption of the 'Vision' statement. However, there will be revenue and capital resource costs in bringing forward the Delivery Schedule projects. Each project will be required to quantify resource cost as part of the business case project approval process.

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 There are no legal implications associated with the adoption of the 'Vision' statement. It is current council policy as part of the Corporate Plan 2016-19 to produce a Horsham Town Centre 'Vision' statement.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There are no significant risks associated with the Horsham Town Centre Vision statement.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act (2010). There are no consequences of the actions proposed in respect of Equality & Diversity, Human Rights; Sustainability and Crime and Disorder. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken in due course with respect to the Delivery Schedule of projects as they are being developed.

APPENDIX A Town Centre Vision Exhibition Consultation Summary Report

APPENDIX B Bishopric Exhibition Consultation Summary Report June 2017

APPENDIX C Horsham Town Centre Vision Statement - Representations and Responses

APPENDIX D Horsham Town Centre 'Vision' Delivery Schedule

APPENDIX E Draft Horsham Town Centre Vision Statement

The appendices are separately attached as part of the Cabinet agenda

Background Papers can be viewed on the Council's website: [here](#) or

<https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planningpolicy/planning-policy/horsham-town-centre-vision>